

be in organ builders themselves. They are often too apt to regard electric action as complicated, untrustworthy, and expensive. It must be remembered that electric work has advanced enormously within the last few years; and if electricity can sweep away the whole of the rest of the action mechanism from organs it is certainly worth consideration. The excellence of the organ at Birkenhead points to the advisability of organ builders going to electricians to get the electrical part of their actions put right, instead of designing it themselves, and then rejecting it as costly or untrustworthy.

—*Industries.*

HOMELIKE HOUSES.*

The love of home is an instinct possessed by man and the greater part of the animal world alike. It is, perhaps, the only sentiment which the reticent Englishman is not ashamed to confess to; indeed, it is his boast that the English language alone possesses the word "home" in its fullest sense. Is it not strange, therefore, that while all possess this instinct the large majority of people are content to live in houses which are quite unworthy shrines of the household gods? The love of home exists still, but the love of the house has almost died out, or is lavished on a building which is quite undeserving. We have only to look round us and contrast the old houses with the new in order to see the truth of this.

Let us picture to ourselves the old Elizabethan house, quiet, dignified and stately, as befits the age. It is early morning on a bright summer day; the master of the house paces the long alley guarded by yew and box, or turns into the flower garden, where the flowers, drenched with dew, give out a sweet, fresh scent; or it is late afternoon, and we see the head of the house sitting with his wife in the shaded arcade, while the children play on the terrace. The air is full of the scent of roses and musical with the hum of bees; the shadows lengthen, the rooks sail slowly through the air; part of the house is in deep, cool shadow, and chimneys and gable-tops begin to glow like burnished gold. There is a sense of perfect rest and contentment; cares are forgotten for a time. Would it be wonderful if, in homes like this, men should grow noble and true, and the love of their home should become a passion? Can we wonder that they should cling to such homes, and feel that here, indeed, there is peace? It is not only the mansion that fills its owner with delight. Take the farmhouse on a summer evening, when the farmer is coming in weary with a day's toil in the fields. The cows are just being driven out into the fields after milking, and he hears the musical clatter of the milkpails as he walks up the path, lined on either side with simple homely flowers in rich profusion. How cool the shaded kitchen looks, and how delicious is the faint smell of wood-smoke! He drops into his chair and is refreshed by the peace and quiet of home. Old houses are all alike in this respect. How well we know the little prim house on the outskirts of a country town, standing back from the road, with a wall in front and a high narrow iron gate with a straight path to the door. We gasp the spirit of the place at once, and know exactly what the owner is like; we can see all the furniture and china and even smell the lavender and rose-leaves. As we continue our walk it is the same thing over again. There is the lawyer's house, and we know without being told that every room is panelled, and that there is a delicious garden at the back of it with fine old trees, and an octagonal white painted

summer-house somewhere at the end of a long path, and roses and lilacs and a hundred other sweet-smelling flowers and shrubs.

I can imagine nothing which can give so keen a sense of pleasure as looking at an old English country-house on a summer evening as the sun is setting. Then one can realise best the beauty of colour and proportion. The house and the garden seem the very incarnation of the spirit of home; all sounds are hushed, and peace and quiet reign supreme. How different is the modern "mansion." Let us take one haphazard; there is no lack of examples. First of all the entrance gate, red-hot with paint and gilding, with stone piers, topped either with lamp-posts or a borrowed crest. This opens into a drive aptly termed "serpentine," and presently the house comes into view. We seem to be able to tell at a glance the character of the owner of this house. Wealthy he undoubtedly is, and the house is apparently designed to advertise the fact to the world in general. The enormous conservatory is an outward and visible sign that priceless orchids are grown within, and many tropical plants whose names and natures are unknown to anyone but the gardener. The windows blink and stare at the sun, and the great sheets of plate glass look like molten brass. The drawing-room is furnished *en suite* in blue or crimson, and he is a bold man who would dare to sit uninvited on any of the gorgeous chairs or sofas. See the garden from the windows: curved paths streaming like ribbons in all directions, manufactured undulations, "specimen" trees and carpet beds, everything baking in the sunlight, and as neat and trim as three gardeners and a boy can make it. No one can feel that this is homelike. The melancholy thing is that this result is not brought about accidentally; it is all deliberately planned and thought out, and may be taken as expressing exactly the spirit of the age. The owner is proud of it, and so, in a measure is the neighbourhood.

Even more depressing than this is a walk in the suburbs of London. North, south, east or west, they are all the same. There are only two styles of suburban houses, the gabled and the ungabled. The gabled is the most popular. Take any one and examine it a little in detail. The height is generally considerably greater than the width. The windows, of which the front mainly consists, are of impossible proportions. There are, of course, a stone bay, with wooden sashes; a porch, rich with brown graining, going half-way up the house; and bricks the colour of a London fog, with wiry streaks of red running through at intervals. A purple slate roof, with a formidable spiky iron ridge, tops the whole, and the house is complete. Houses of this kind are stereotyped, and have enclosed London like a forest; thousands of people live in them and call them home, and I suppose they may also be considered as expressing the spirit of the age. In every age and in every country the spirit of the time is shown in the homes of the people, and I am afraid that when future generations read our history from our houses, they will not see in them anything to increase their admiration for the spirit of the nineteenth century. The house is so often built with too much regard to economy—thin walls and floors, and a too close apportionment of space; or, on the other hand, it is loaded with ornament inside and out, and is more a vehicle for the display of the owner's wealth than a home. It is difficult to say what it is that gives a house its particular character of homeliness; the character is there, but it is impossible to dissect the building and say, it is here or it is there; the home feeling is everywhere alike. Breadth, is, perhaps, the most marked feature in a home-like house—the long, low building seems to fit better into the landscape than the house of many storeys. The

* A paper by Mr. Ernest Newton, architect, read at the last meeting of the Architectural Association, London.